

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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THE ROLE OF AIRPOWER IN PEACE OPERATIONS

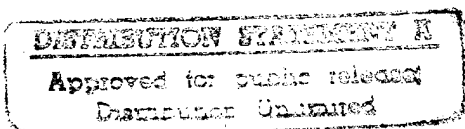
by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Maritime Operations .

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Since the end of the Cold War, Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) have emerged as a prevalent and important aspect of U.S. military operations. Among these MOOTW, peace operations have proven themselves recurring and costly events. Paralleling this has been the meteoric rise in the importance of tactical airpower. Military proponents of airpower and many politicians now view airpower as a "low-risk", "high-return" panacea for all military operations. This essay examines the role of tactical airpower in peace operations. Specifically, it addresses the lack of adequate doctrinal guidance for the operational commander with airpower at his disposal. An examination of the links between the principles of MOOTW and the tenets of airpower reveals that airpower provides the operational commander a versatile and flexible instrument that is often a "double-edged-sword." The potentially adverse consequences of a misapplication of airpower, in the politically driven agendas of peace operations, demand that this issue be examined and resolved. Current doctrine must be improved to reduce the definitional gray areas in peace operations. Additionally, current doctrine must provide a basis to address the role of airpower in peace operations. Finally, our training paradigm must change from viewing peace operations as a "lesser included capability" to one of dedicated peace operations training.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

*"While we have historically focused on warfighting, our military profession is increasingly changing its focus to a complex array of military operations-other than war."*¹

Peace operations have emerged as a prevalent and important aspect of U.S. Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). Additionally, many recent peace operations have witnessed the emergence of peace operations involving an increased threat or use of force. Presidential Decision Directive 25 states, "Peace Operations have changed since the end of the Cold War. They are no longer limited to the interposition of small numbers of passive, unarmed observers. Today, they also include more complex and sometimes more robust uses of military resources to achieve a range of political and humanitarian objectives."²

As peace operations have risen in importance, so too has the role of airpower.* In the eyes of many, Desert Storm validated the claims of airpower's proponents. They claim that technology and experience have finally caught up with airpower doctrine. Airpower demonstrated in Iraq that it could mass great firepower anywhere and attack any facet of the enemy's

¹ The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War, Joint Pub 3-07 (Washington: 1995), Chairman's comments.

² Department of State, Key Elements of the Clinton Administration's Policy On Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations with Executive Summary, Department of State Publication 10161, (Washington: 1993), p.11.

* For the purposes of this paper, all references to airpower imply *Tactical* airpower.

power structure.³ Regardless of the debate, airpower has become and will remain an essential ingredient in almost every type of warfare and in almost every setting.

The role and impact of airpower in peace operations, however, is not nearly as self evident as proponents would have us believe. Several issues cloud the utility of airpower in MOOTW. First, the duality of MOOTW--the higher potential for conflict between military and political considerations in MOOTW strategy--may dilute the impact of all military effort, including airpower. Second, the nature of MOOTW seldom allows for the application of massive firepower, aerial or otherwise, on lucrative targets linked to a Center of Gravity. Finally, the U.S. military has largely ignored the subject. Compared to nuclear and conventional war, few resources and little doctrinal thinking has been devoted to the subject of utilizing airpower in peace operations.⁴

What then is the role of airpower in peace operations? The growing tendency on the part of some political and military leaders to view the application of airpower as a low-risk, high-payoff panacea in MOOTW makes it imperative that the operational commander understand the capabilities and limitations of this instrument. A lack of current doctrine, focused training, and basic understanding about its utility demands that airpower's

³ Dennis M. Drew, "Airpower in the New World Order," Strategic Studies Institute U.S. Army War College, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: 1993) p.5.

⁴ Ibid., p.7.

role in peace operations be addressed. These issues are critical for the operational commander because:

- > Current doctrinal definitions of peace operations are nebulous and confusing. There is a large gray area between peace-keeping and peace-enforcement.
- > The political nature of peace operations will drive all other considerations.
- > Little doctrinal guidance is provided to the operational commander to link the tenets of airpower to the principles of MOOTW.
- > Current training and force structure considerations for MOOTW are considered a "lesser included capability" of conventional forces.
- > The adverse consequences of a misapplication of airpower are as important a consideration as are its many inherent advantages.

CHAPTER II

PEACE OPERATIONS AND AIRPOWER DEFINED

MOOTW focus on deterring war, promoting peace and resolving conflict. These operations vary in their level of violence and may involve elements of both combat and non-combat operations.⁵ As an important subset of MOOTW, peace operations are defined as military operations in support of diplomatic efforts to reach a long-term political settlement. Joint Pub 3-07 further categorizes peace operations by the terms Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement.

Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) are military operations undertaken with the consent of all parties to the dispute. They are designed to monitor and facilitate implementation of an agreement (cease fire, truce, or other such agreement) in support of diplomatic efforts aimed at long-term political settlements.⁶ PKO operational objectives may include; observation and monitoring of truces and cease fires, supervision duties, investigation of complaints and violations, negotiation and mediation, and liaison activities. Key ingredients are high levels of consent and impartiality and low levels of force (generally only defensive). PKO are often ambiguous situations. A peacekeeping force may be required to

⁵ Joint Pub 3-07, p.I-1.

⁶ Ibid., p.III-12.

deal with extreme levels of tension and violence without becoming a belligerent in the conflict.⁷

Peace Enforcement Operations (PEO) are the application of military force, or the threat of its use, to compel compliance with resolutions or sanctions designed to maintain or restore peace and order.⁸ PEO do not require the consent of all parties involved as do PKO. Units conducting PEO may not be able to maintain their objective neutrality and must be prepared to apply elements of combat power.⁹ This is a critical distinction from PKO, which normally enjoy the consent of all parties and associates use of force only with defensive situations. PEO operational objectives include; Restoration and maintenance of order and stability, guarantee and denial of movement, enforcement of sanctions, establishment and supervision of protected zones, and forcible separation of belligerents.

Airpower, as defined in Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force (AFM 1-1, Vol.I), grows out of the ability to use a platform operating in or passing through the aerospace medium for military purposes.¹⁰ More specifically, tactical airpower is that military force provided by aircraft through direct or indirect fires in support of an operation.

⁷ Department of the Army, Operations, FM 100-5 (Washington: 1993), p.13-7.

⁸ Joint Pub 3-07, p.III-13.

⁹ FM 100-5, p.13-7.

¹⁰ Department of the Air Force, Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force, AFM 1-1, Vol.I (Washington: 1992), p.5.

This may include both fixed wing and rotary winged, conventional and Special Operations aircraft. The inherent speed, range and flexibility of airpower combine to make it arguably the most versatile component of military power available to the operational commander.

CHAPTER III

CURRENT DOCTRINE

Several publications contain doctrinal guidance for the conduct of peace operations. For the operational commander, the most authoritative of these are the Doctrine for Joint Operations (Joint Pub 3-0) and the Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War (Joint Pub 3-07). These publications list six principles governing the conduct of MOOTW:

Objective, Unity of effort, Security, Restraint, Perseverance, and Legitimacy.¹¹

The proper employment of airpower is also governed by several doctrinal publications. The U.S. Air Force provides the doctrinal foundation for the employment of all airpower, regardless of service, in Volume I of the Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force (AFM 1-1). It delineates the basic tenets of airpower as: **Centralized Control/Decentralized Execution, Flexibility/Versatility, Priority, Synergy, Balance, Concentration, and Persistence.**¹²

There is little doctrine, however, that links the tenets of airpower to the principles of MOOTW. While possessing a plethora of guidance and doctrine on each individual subject, the operational commander has little to aid him in the

¹¹ The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations, Joint Pub 3-0 (Washington: 1995), p.V-2.

¹² AFM 1-1, Vol.1, p.8.

application of airpower in peace operations. In Joint Tactics, Techniques, And Procedures For Peacekeeping Operations (Joint Pub 3-07.3), the discussion of air operations is limited to a brief overview that, "An air component can make a significant contribution to all peacekeeping forces and observers...The air component's ability and flexibility in covering large areas in a short amount of time is an asset for both ground and maritime operations."¹³ Similarly, in Peace Operations (FM 100-23) a brief discussion of airpower states, "Tactical air (TACAIR) can provide selective firepower, particularly in the employment of precision-guided munitions. Collateral damage and unexploded ordnance are significant planning factors when considering the employment of TACAIR."¹⁴

Clearly there are many more considerations for the application of airpower than the few covered by current joint doctrine. An examination of the link between selected principles of MOOTW and the tenets of airpower will bring many more to light.

OBJECTIVE. *Direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective.*

"A clearly defined and attainable objective-with a precise understanding of what constitutes success-is critical when the

¹³ The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Tactics, Techniques, And Procedures For Peacekeeping Operations, Joint Pub 3-07.3 (Washington: 1994), p.I-5.

¹⁴ Department of the Army, Peace Operations, FM 100-23 (Washington: 1994), p.42.

U.S. is involved in peace operations."¹⁵ This holds especially true in the employment of airpower because of the wide range of options available. The tenet of **Flexibility/Versatility** applies here. Airpower is uniquely capable of pursuing tactical, operational, or strategic objectives-or all three simultaneously.¹⁶

By definition, the role of airpower in PKO is clearly auxiliary. Paradoxically, however, while its tactical employment is clearly limited, the strategic contributions of airpower may be significant. The commitment of U.S. airpower is an important signal to the international community and serves to reassure contributing countries that their commitment of resources is prudent.¹⁷ Additionally, airpower may add credibility to peacekeeping forces in the eyes of the disputing parties. The "show of force" provided by the presence of airpower and the versatility it adds to the observation and monitoring objectives of PKO may serve to discourage potential aggressors.

Recalling the objectives of PEO, the utility of airpower in achieving those objectives is much more evident, involving the application of military force and as such the tenets of **Concentration and Synergy**. The speed and massive firepower characteristic of modern airpower make it a vital component of

¹⁵ FM 100-23, p.15.

¹⁶ AFM 1-1, Vol.I, p.15.

¹⁷ LtCol Brooks L. Bash, "Airpower and Peacekeeping", Airpower Journal, Spring 1995, p.67.

the operational commander's arsenal. Coordinated with other joint forces, airpower can enhance both the effectiveness and efficiency of forces conducting PEO.

In setting and achieving objectives, the operational commander must also consider the potentially adverse consequences of employing airpower. These consequences include problems with philosophy and politics; negative perceptions of airpower; economic restrictions; and the unpredictable utility of airpower.¹⁸

First, airpower may have little utility dealing with problems of philosophy and politics so often found in PKO. The mere presence of airpower cannot replace the required interaction of ground forces in the day to day operations of a peacekeeping force.

Second, the destructive potential of airpower may lead to negative perceptions about its presence. While not unique to airpower alone, there is something special about the psychological impact of attacks by airpower. Here, airpower is often a "double edged sword." On one hand it may demoralize enemy forces by appearing omnipotent and all powerful, as it did in the Gulf War. On the other hand it may rally an enemy's will to resist, as we saw in Bosnia where Serbian forces saw the employment of airpower as being on behalf of their opponents.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid., p.67.

¹⁹ Group Captain APN Lambert, The Psychology Of Airpower, Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies (London: 1995), p.91.

Third, the financial implications of airpower operations are a concern for the operational commander. The recent surge of peace operations has caused the UN peacekeeping budget to balloon from \$421 million in 1991 to over \$2.7 billion in 1992. From a U.S. perspective, the employment of airpower in peace operations will have to be weighed against the domestic implications of the high cost of airpower operations.²⁰

Finally, and most importantly, the operational commander must have a sense of airpower's utility before deciding upon its application in a peace operation. The benefits of airpower cannot be constant due to numerous variables such as weather, geography, and the character and length of the operation. The nature of peace operations often make viable targets for airpower difficult to find. In reporting on the effectiveness of NATO airpower in protecting safe areas in Bosnia, the UN Secretary general reported that, "...because of these constraints and the parties' growing awareness of them, the limited effectiveness of airpower in determining attacks against the safe areas has become progressively clearer. Furthermore, the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR military personnel on the ground, essential for the precise identification of the targets before and during air action, was extremely limited. In these circumstances, airpower could not be effectively employed."²¹

²⁰ Bash, p.68.

²¹ Frank Cass, ed., Safe Areas: Report of the Secretary General on Resolution 959, International Peacekeeping, Vol.2 (London: Spring 1995), p.121.

UNITY OF EFFORT. *Seek unity of effort in every operation.*

Unity of effort strives to direct all means to a common objective. In peace operations this principle may be complicated by any number of nonmilitary organizations including nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and private voluntary organizations (PVOs). Operational commanders may answer to a UN or civilian chief and may also employ the services of NGOs and PVOs.

Since most peace operations are UN controlled, the concern here is the integration of U.S. airpower into the UN Command and Control structure. The UN usually demands operational control of forces assigned to UN commanders. Historically, however, the U.S. has been reluctant to relinquish command of airpower assets. Concerns here emanate from the fear of misapplication of airpower and excessive exposure to risk. "Specifically the UN does not have the capability or expertise to run a large airpower operation, and the employment of airpower would therefore be accomplished ad hoc."²²

Here the tenet of **Centralized Control/Decentralized Execution** applies. As AFM 1-1 explains, airpower should be centrally controlled to achieve advantageous synergies, establish effective priorities, capitalize on unique strategic and operational flexibilities, ensure unity of purpose, and

²² Bash, p.69.

minimize the potential for conflicting objectives.²³ The concerns over control of U.S. airpower assets can be solved by creating a UN "air component commander" headed by a U.S. airman. This concept is in line with current UN doctrine of dividing national forces into sectors, and is similar to the structure used for control of U.S. airpower supporting the Bosnia no-fly zone. In sum, "U.S. concerns for effective airpower application and avoidance of unnecessary risk are warranted but can be solved by the integration of U.S. expertise into the chain of command."²⁴

SECURITY. *Never permit hostile factions to acquire an unexpected advantage.*

In peace operations security deals with protection of forces against virtually any person, element or group hostile to our objectives. Operational commanders must be ready to preempt or counter activities that could bring harm to his units or jeopardize mission accomplishment. Furthermore, they must not be lulled into believing that the benign nature of some peace operations does not put their force at risk.

Here the airpower tenet of **Flexibility/Versatility** once again applies. While some would argue that airpower is useless in peace operations, the ability to concentrate force anywhere and attack any facet of the enemy's power is one of outstanding strengths. Besides its lethal firepower, airpower

²³ AFM 1-1, Vol.1, p.8.

²⁴ Bash, p.69.

adds the advantages of patrolling/surveying large areas in relatively short periods of time. If the situation allows and warrants, airpower may preemptively attack enemy threats before they put ground forces at risk.

RESTRAINT. *Apply appropriate military capability prudently.*

The principle of restraint logically follows security. Restraints on weapon platforms, tactics, and limits on levels of violence are characteristics of all peace operations. In PKO force is utilized only in self defense. In PEO, force may be used to coerce factions and may be used preemptively. In both cases, however, it may have far reaching operational, diplomatic and political consequences. Its use may escalate tensions and violence and embroil peace operations troops in a harmful, long-term conflict contrary to operational objectives.²⁵

Here the tenets of **Priority, Concentration and Balance** apply. The operational commander must decide if the use of airpower will meet his operational objectives. When airpower is utilized it should be precise and concentrated to minimize noncombatant casualties and collateral damage. The advent of Precision Guided Munitions (PGMs) enable precise attacks by airpower and decrease the chances of collateral damage.

It is within the principle of restraint that the operational commander faces the most serious questions with

²⁵ FM 100-23, p.17.

regard to the use of airpower. As FM 100-23 states, "In all cases, force will be prudently applied proportional to the threat."²⁶ Few targets in peace operations will meet the criteria of proportionality outright. The UN Secretary General found that airpower in Bosnia has had major psychological and political impacts that can alter relationships and the conduct of ongoing negotiations. Attacks by airpower in support of UNPROFOR forces in Bosnia led to the closure of the Sarajevo airport and the interruption of humanitarian assistance for ten days as a reprisal by Serbian forces.²⁷ Similarly, in Somalia the perception of the unrestrained use of helicopter attacks had adverse consequences. "The perception that UN/U.S. forces were striking hospitals or other non-combatant targets had the effect of eroding public support in the United States, Somalia and other coalition countries."²⁸

While seemingly at odds with the principle of security, the principle of restraint does not preclude the utilization of airpower by operational commanders. He may still utilize forces at his discretion when required by the situation, to display U.S. resolve, to protect U.S. lives and property, or to accomplish other critical objectives. The principle of

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Cass, p.122.

²⁸ The Army-Air Force Center For Low Intensity Conflict, An Analysis Of The Application Of The "Principles Of Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) " In Somalia, (Washington: 1994), p.8.

restraint must, however, permeate considerations concerning ROE, choice of weapons and equipment, and other control measures.²⁹

LEGITIMACY. *Sustain the willing acceptance by the people of the right of the government to govern or a group or agency to make and carry out decisions.*

Legitimacy grows from the perception of the legality, morality and correctness of the actions of peace operations forces. Furthermore, the concept of legitimacy can only be sustained with all parties if operations are conducted with "scrupulous regard for international norms on the use of military forces and regard for humanitarian principles."³⁰

In peace operations, the impartiality of forces is critical to the success of operations and the concept of legitimacy. While much more difficult to maintain in PEO than in PKO, the operational commander must attempt to conduct operations without favor to either side or political point of view. The use of airpower finds difficult going in these circumstances and once again is a "double-edged-sword." Airpower is inherently offensive--even when used defensively it attacks by its very nature. The employment of airpower may very well destroy any perception of impartiality and thereby damage the PKO/PEO force's legitimacy. Conversely, the use of airpower and PGM's can dramatically diminish the intrusiveness of ground forces and the impact of their less accurate weapons.

²⁹ FM 100-23, p.17.

³⁰ FM 100-23, p.18.

Here the tenets of **Synergy and Balance** apply. A proper force mixture will allow the operational commander to exploit the advantages of each element of his available forces. Airpower can enhance or be enhanced by ground forces. The proper mix of airpower and ground forces allows the operational commander to balance combat necessity and effectiveness against risk to his forces and the legitimacy of his operation.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has established the growing importance and prevalence of peace operations in the list of fundamentally different types of conflicts that U.S. forces may face. Further, it has established that airpower will remain a key ingredient in the options employed by operational commanders. An examination of current doctrine on each subject leads to several conclusions.

First, the operational commander must understand the critical distinction between PKO and PEO. While both are classified as peace operations, they take place under vastly different conditions involving the variables of consent, force and impartiality.³¹ The degree to which these variables are present plays a critical role in the nature of the peace operation, force structure for the operation and the appropriateness and utility of airpower. While offering the advantages of speed, versatility and lethal firepower, the operational commander must also consider the possible adverse consequences as an effect of airpower's misapplication. There is clearly potential for conflict between military and political considerations operating at cross-purposes, destroying the principles of legitimacy and restraint and causing the operational commander to unknowingly cross a thin but vague line

³¹ FM 100-23, p.12.

between PKO and PEO. He must keep in mind those political objectives and unique social conditions which drive peace operations at every level, resisting the "knee-jerk" reactions of those who view the application of airpower as both an operational and political panacea. To allow any ambiguity between the desired political and military end state and the tactical mandate given to his forces is a recipe for disaster.

Second, current doctrine must be expanded to address the utility and application of airpower in peace operations. Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force (AFM 1-1) and the Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War (Joint Pub 3-07) provide a starting point to examine this subject. At best, current doctrine offers commanders a brief set of principles and tenets that may contain some broad hints on how to conduct peace operations.³² While publications such as FM 100-5 and FM 100-23 specifically address and set doctrine for the conduct of ground operations in PKO and PEO, no such doctrine exists for the utilization of airpower. Current doctrine addresses the issue in only a marginal way, without mentioning any specific role for airpower.

Without proper doctrine the operational commander is intellectually and structurally hampered in his choice of force mix, perhaps finding himself in operational control of airpower assets inappropriate in achieving specific PEO/PKO mission objectives. Comprehensive, thought-through doctrine would

³² The Army-Air Force Center For Low Intensity Conflict, p.10.

provide rational force mix recommendations for various peace operations and should further address the subtle operational implications of airpower employment in peace operations. Particularly for the "non-airminded" commander, this would provide much needed discussion of the multiple considerations the operational commander faces in choosing to utilize airpower.

Third, our current training paradigm must change to include specific training for peace operations. The Services organize, train and equip forces for prompt and sustained combat in the pursuit of national security objectives. The resulting force structure is one largely designed to conduct large scale conventional types of operations. Any capability to conduct MOOTW operations is generally viewed as a "lesser included capability," despite the fact that they represent the most likely tasking for U.S. forces in the near future. Recent events, such as the disaster of the Iranian hostage rescue mission and events in Somalia, have illustrated that the current force structure may not be capable of operations throughout the spectrum of warfare while training only to one.

AFM 1-1 states that, "Training should be conducted for all forms and levels of war...Aerospace forces must be proficient at all levels if they are to respond successfully to military challenges."³³ This training must stress the Synergy and Balance tenets of airpower. Proper force mix and flexible, rigorously evaluated training, directed specifically toward

³³ AFM 1-1, Vol. 1, p.18.

peace operations, will produce forces more capable of confronting peace operations. This training must be balanced against the impact on budgetary and readiness considerations. As events in Somalia witnessed, however, the cost in lives and blood of troops unfamiliar with the nuances of peace operations far exceeded what the American public is willing to pay.

Finally, we return to our original question. What is the utility of airpower in peace operations? For the operational commander there is no evidence to suggest that the trend in the increasing importance of airpower will change. He must, however, avoid pressure from airpower proponents who see or look for a role and a mission for airpower in any situation regardless of its implications. This requires that he have a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between airpower's enormous capabilities and the principles of MOOTW. Additionally, it requires a rethinking of current doctrine, training, force structure, and operational concepts. The operational commander cannot simply throw airpower at every situation. Quite often he will find that airpower provides him with a "double-edged-sword", replete with as many adverse consequences as advantages. As such, airpower must be viewed in its proper context as simply a powerful tool in the arsenal of the operational commander.

APPENDIX I

TENETS OF AEROSPACE POWER

Source: Headquarters, Department of the Air Force, Basic Doctrine of the United States Air Force, AFM 1-1 (Washington, DC: 1992), Figure 2-2, p.8.

Centralized Control/Decentralized Execution

Aerospace forces should be centrally controlled by an airman to achieve advantageous synergies, establish effective priorities, capitalize on unique strategic and operational flexibilities, ensure unity of purpose, and minimize the potential for conflicting objectives. Execution of aerospace missions should be decentralized to achieve effective spans of control, responsiveness, and tactical flexibility.

Flexibility/Versatility

The unique flexibility and versatility of aerospace power should be fully used and not compromised. The ability to concentrate force anywhere and attack any facet of the enemy's power is the outstanding strength of aerospace power.

Priority

Effective priorities for the use of aerospace forces flow from an informed dialogue between the joint or combined commander and the air component commander. The air commander should assess the possible uses as to their importance to (1)

the war, (2) the campaign, and (3) the battle. Air commanders should be alert for the potential diversion of aerospace forces to missions of marginal importance.

Synergy

Internally, the missions of aerospace power, when applied in comprehensive and mutually supportive air campaigns, produce effects well beyond the proportion of each mission's individual contribution to the campaign. Externally, aerospace operations can be applied in coordinated joint campaigns with surface forces, either to enhance or be enhanced by surface forces.

Balance

The air commander should balance combat opportunity, necessity, effectiveness, and efficiency against the associated risk to friendly aerospace forces. Technologically sophisticated aerospace assets are not available in vast numbers and cannot be produced quickly.

Concentration

Aerospace power is most effective when it is focused in purpose and not needlessly dispersed.

Persistence

Aerospace power should be applied persistently. Destroyed targets may be rebuilt by resourceful enemies. Air commanders should plan for restrikes against important targets.

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